



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Commissioner Gist Ends Seniority-Based Teacher Assignments

In a letter to all superintendents, Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist has told districts to end all teacher assignments that are based solely on seniority.

Gist has told the superintendents today that the new Basic Education Program (BEP), which the Board of Regents approved last June and which goes into effect next July, requires the “continuous improvement of student learning” to be the basis for all decision-making, including personnel assignment and evaluation.

“The new BEP requires that the system of management, professional training, evaluation, and assignment of instructional staff ensures that highly effective educators work with classrooms of students who have significant achievement gaps,” Gist wrote. “In my view, no system that bases teacher assignments solely on seniority can comply with this regulation.”

“This letter from the commissioner is a milestone in our efforts to improve teacher quality and to ensure that students benefit from the skills and experience of highly effective teachers,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents. “As we implement the new BEP, we will continue to address achievement gaps and to advance learning for all students.”

Gist told all superintendents “to ensure that nothing in any collective-bargaining agreement prevents your district from assigning staff based on a set of performance criteria and on student need rather than by strict seniority.”

She told superintendents to take these actions as the collective-bargaining agreements in their districts come up for renewal.

“This may well have implications for personnel decisions you make prior to the March 1<sup>st</sup> deadline for layoff notices,” Gist wrote. She said she was writing to superintendents now to give them time to work with their labor unions to implement the new system of teacher assignment based on student needs.

Under previous orders to districts that have missed targets for multiple years, Gist has required both Central Falls and Providence to base teacher assignment on teacher qualifications and student need rather than on seniority and teacher preference. Her letter today, citing the authority of the BEP regulations, extends the requirement statewide.

“My highest priority for transforming Rhode Island education is ensuring that every student has highly effective teachers,” Gist wrote. “To meet this priority, we must be sure that districts select and retain only the most highly effective staff and that districts base teacher and administrator assignment on student need.”

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